

6

27535.

LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY

LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY

BY

LORD HUGH CECIL

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

1910

All Rights Reserved

Acc	27835
Vol	323.44 ccc
Date	9 th Aug 1960
Sl. C.	A Mukherji
Cl	✓
Cat	✓
Bl. Card	✓
Ch	R.B.

PREFATORY NOTE

THIS Address was delivered on 4th November 1909, on the occasion of my Inauguration as President of the Associated Societies of the University of Edinburgh. Since its delivery I have revised, amended, and somewhat expanded it. But it is proper to remind the reader that it remains an Address and not an essay, and that it should be read with that indulgence to roughness and superficiality which is more readily accorded to spoken than to written compositions.

LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY

GENTLEMEN,—

It is perhaps unnecessary for me to say that in selecting the topic of Liberty and Authority for my inaugural address I design rather to treat of those subjects in their social and political relations than to trench on the difficult ground of metaphysics, or to aspire to solve problems that have long perplexed the ingenuity of the greatest minds. My humbler function is to discuss political liberty and its limitations and objects. At the outset, let us inquire what we mean by Liberty for the purpose of this discussion. Without aiming at an exact or scientific definition, it is perhaps sufficient to say that

-o

Liberty consists in being able to obey your own will and conscience rather than the will and conscience of others. The question is how far can that liberty be pressed ; how far is it right for society to respect and safeguard that liberty in the case of each individual, or how far must it be restricted for the common good, for the sake of the liberty of others or for any other sufficient object.

Now this question has been considered by many great men, and in particular I would direct your attention to the treatment of the subject by John Stuart Mill. His powers of exposition were certainly equal to any topic however difficult, and the singular lucidity of expression of which he was a master makes it always convenient to treat his writings as a theme—as a peg on which to hang other speculations. Now his solution of the problem of the limitations of political liberty

is, as he himself says, very simple. It is that the individual should have liberty as long as only his own affairs are concerned, but should be liable to interference so soon as it becomes a question of the rights or interests of others. "Over himself," Mill says, "over his own body and mind the individual is sovereign"; and he proceeds to make a distinction between those things which are self-regardful and those which are not.

This theory is, as Mill says, very simple. But with all respect to so great a man it must be said that it is unsound and inadequate. For, in the first place, everything that we do concerns others than ourselves. There is no such thing as a self-regardful act or a self-regardful word, and a thought is only self-regardful so long as it remains a thought and has no prospect of being translated into the region either of

speech or of action. Indeed, no oppressor, no persecutor, has ever been so foolish—(unless it be perhaps some modern philanthropist)—as to desire to regulate action which is strictly self-regardful. People were burned in this island three hundred years ago, not because they held particular opinions, but because by propagating them they jeopardised, as was thought, the foundations of society in this world and the eternal welfare of humanity in the next. When the fires of Smithfield were lit, it was not to restrict self-regardful acts, it was to uphold the great moral and spiritual fabric of the Church and to save souls from hell. The disturbance of orthodoxy may be a healthy or an unhealthy process; but it is certainly not a process which only regards the heterodox. And if the teaching of heresy be not self-regardful still less is the practice of vice. It is, in

short, plain that people are tempted to interfere with the liberty of others precisely because they believe that that liberty is being exercised in a manner which is not self-regardful. Mill was not blind to this objection. He supplements his main theory by additional arguments much sounder than itself. Indeed, as the student peruses the essay "On Liberty," he cannot help being reminded of some insecurely erected structure that is always needing to be shored up for fear of falling. Mill is for ever bringing in considerations different from and independent of his original contention, in order to sustain what without that assistance must assuredly fall. At the very outset he is obliged to say that his principle does not apply to children or to savage nations, but only to those Western peoples who have become civilised. But how unsatisfactory, how arbitrary, is

such a distinction as that. What is a savage? At what point do you graduate in civilisation? Here we seem almost to encounter that vulgar notion that civilisation consists of the British Isles and a few contiguous places, and that all the more distant parts of the earth are savage. No one who takes the trouble to con over all the different races and nations of the world but must be struck by the impossibility of drawing a sharp line, and saying that those who are on one side of it are savage, and that those who are upon the other are civilised. Let it be granted that the natives of Africa are savage, are we to say the same thing of those in India, with their ancient civilisation, or those in Egypt, or those in Turkey, or the Chinese, or the Japanese, or the Russians, or the Spaniards? At what point in this nice graduation of human

progress do we pass from savagery into civilisation? And indeed, what authority have we to say, if liberty be a right at all, that the savage or the child is not entitled to it? If it be a right, it belongs to man presumably because he is man. At any rate, no other title to it can be suggested, and if it belongs to him as man how are we justified in excluding from the enjoyment of this human right so very large a portion—I suppose much more than half,—of the human race? The truth is that liberty is not a right. In this respect it differs from justice. Every human being, the savage man as well as the civilised, the child as well as the adult, is entitled to justice. Some invasions of liberty are indeed also breaches of justice; and against such the savage must be guarded. But while he must be secured justice as full and as exact as granted to

the most cultivated of men, he cannot be given as much liberty. For liberty is not a right. It is rather the essential condition of human progress as it is also in its perfection the consummation of that progress. Humanity, it may be said, is on a journey from the animal to the divine. Man, the first of animals, is also made in the image of God. As time passes he is meant more and more to be transformed into the likeness of his Creator. And the atmosphere which he must breathe thus to grow, is the air of freedom, so that in the end he may become, like his Type, perfectly free. It is absolute liberty towards which humanity is moving; and naturally those who have gone least far upon the journey are less fit for the environment of perfection than those who have gone farther. As man marches forward to his appointed end, he becomes

more and more fit to enjoy the liberty which is one of the attributes of divinity. And the more liberty he can be given without disaster, the swifter does he move. Every restriction, every control is a hindrance. Because of his imperfection some control is necessary, but none is without ill effect. Restrictions may be compared to the bandages needed to support a strained limb. They must be used, and yet they weaken and cramp. Happy the day when one is laid aside.

The principle which I venture to suggest to you ought to be substituted for that which Mill lays down, the sound ground for maintaining liberty is that liberty is the condition of human progress, and that without it there cannot be in any true sense virtue or righteousness. Virtue is attained in proportion as liberty is attained: for

virtue does not consist in doing right, but in choosing to do right. This is the great distinction, surely, between the animal and the man. The animal always does right; it cannot do wrong. But it has no virtue, for it lacks the indispensable power to choose between right and wrong. The animal, though it never does anything but right, remains without virtue; but a human being is capable of wrong as well as right; and because he is capable of wrong his virtue is real virtue and not the mere performance of righteous 'acts. This great truth, a truth which is of course familiar to all those who have ever attempted to consider the problem of the origin of evil, is what enables us to see the value of liberty and to prize it as it deserves. If it be true that without liberty virtue cannot exist, if without liberty man is no more than the first

of the animals, we see at once in what place in the moral hierarchy liberty must be set, how great, how precious a thing it is, how serious is the mischief of any loss of what stands in so essential a relation to virtue itself.

Illustrations make things clear, and therefore let me give an illustration, one which Mill himself considers, and which will in a moment enable any one to distinguish the principle I am trying to lay down from that on which he insists. Let me take the problem of the inculcation of temperance. Now Mill lays down that it is an invasion of liberty to constrain any one to be temperate. It seems to me on the principle that he enunciates he is evidently wrong, because drunkenness certainly interferes with the happiness of others. He does indeed recognise that if drunkenness leads a man

habitually to offend against his neighbour, he may be legitimately restrained from getting drunk ; but it is manifest that drunkenness distresses and pains other people, even in cases where it never leads to anything like physical violence. Mill's theory really amounts to this, that it is not an invasion of liberty to stop a man getting drunk if it leads him to beat his wife, but it is an invasion of liberty if the drunkard only breaks his wife's heart. That seems to me an evidently absurd contention. Moral pain is just as real as physical pain, and if a wife is entitled to be protected against being beaten, she is also entitled, so far as liberty is concerned, to be protected against moral suffering. Nor on his principle can there be any adequate defence for the restrictions which by universal consent are put upon the consumption of alcohol in savage countries. What then is

the defence, if defence there be, for insisting on liberty as against the extreme prohibitionist position? It is surely this, that the prohibitionist destroys true temperance. Temperance consists not merely in abstaining from getting drunk, but in choosing to abstain from getting drunk. There is no temperance except where it is open to a man to get drunk and he deliberately refuses to do so. This is the meaning of that sentence, often quoted and often denounced, of a great English Bishop who said that he would rather see England free than England sober. It would have expressed his meaning, I think, more accurately and less polemically if he had said that he wished Englishmen to be either temperate or intemperate rather than that they should all be neither the one nor the other. It is non-temperance that he denounced, that negative condition which is

neither temperance nor intemperance, achieving indeed the physical results of temperance, but having none of its moral value or grandeur. It is the best that can be reached by those races who are far back on the road of progress; but the British people have passed beyond these beggarly elements. What the prohibitionist is really intent on doing is to destroy that discipline of liberty on which true virtue depends. He wants to cut down the tree that bears the forbidden fruit in the midst of the Garden of Eden, and if we accept the teaching in the sublime allegory that opens our Christian revelation, we must surely agree that there is something presumptuous in seeking moral progress by such an inversion of the Divine plan.

We recognise, practically, perhaps, rather than speculatively, that this theory of liberty is the true one in the ordinary regulation

which we make for the education of youth. Why is it that a boy of the well-to-do classes has least liberty when he is at a private school, has more liberty when he goes to a public school, and has almost the complete liberty of manhood when he is at a university? Clearly it is so because the purpose is to allow him to choose between right and wrong as freely as he can without evidently worse mischief. Unless it is evidently mischievous, we wish to accustom the boy and the young man to choose between right and wrong, between what is wise and foolish ; and accordingly we are constantly increasing the measure of liberty that is allowed to him, as he grows older and is more fit to use that liberty well. And that principle applied in the education of youth is the principle we must apply in the wider sphere of political and social action. We must give always as

much liberty as possible. It does not seem to me that you can draw an absolutely defined theoretical line, and say, as Mill tried to do, restrictions on this side of the line are legitimate, and those on that side are illegitimate. No such line can be drawn. All we can say is that every restriction considered as a restriction is a mischief, and it is only to be justified if you can show that such an invasion of liberty is necessary to avoid some mischief plainly greater. And we must do this, keenly feeling that it is by the moral discipline of liberty, by allowing people to choose between what is right and wrong, wise and foolish, that alone human progress is achieved. Here let me say a word of caution even at the risk of uttering what sounds like a platitude. A great many people have never made up their minds to recognise that human liberty consists in the

power of doing, not what others approve of, but what they disapprove of. Similarly they cannot perceive that property consists in something which you may misuse and not in something which you may only use as others think right. If you were to judge of the rights of property by the controversies you see from time to time in the newspapers, you would certainly assume that an owner of property is not entitled to his property unless he uses it rightly. That is a doctrine destructive of property altogether, or rather it turns the idea into nonsense. And similarly with liberty. Liberty consists in the power of doing what others disapprove of. If an individual has not the power and the right to do what others deprecate, he is not free at all. We must therefore be constantly on our guard against supposing that this liberty which we have seen to be so essential to

human progress is restricted or altogether taken away by those who in respect to each particular restriction may maintain with the utmost fervour and sincerity that they are only urging that people should do what is manifestly or demonstrably wise and virtuous.

In order to encourage ourselves in that attitude of defending liberty, let us go on to consider in some detail what may be called the authoritarian attack on liberty, and how far it is liable to lead politicians and others astray from the true path. I do not know anywhere where you can read the authoritarian position more brilliantly and more attractively stated than in the political writings of Matthew Arnold. He was never tired of deriding and denouncing the ideal of doing as you like. In *Culture and Anarchy*, as well as in others of his books, he emphasises the importance of

controlling foolish individuals and correcting their errors by the hand of the State which should express the mind of the best self of the community. In *Culture and Anarchy* he writes :—

“When I began to speak of culture, I insisted on our bondage to machinery, on our proneness to value machinery as an end in itself, without looking beyond it to the end for which alone, in truth, it is valuable. Freedom, I said, was one of those things which we thus worshipped in itself, without enough regarding the ends for which freedom is to be desired. In our common notions and talk about freedom, we eminently show our idolatry of machinery. Our prevalent notion is,—and I quoted a number of instances to prove it,—that it is a most happy and important thing for a man merely to be able to do as he likes. On what he is to do when he is thus free to do as he likes, we do not lay so much stress.

Our familiar praise of the British Constitution under which we live, is that it is a system of checks—a system which stops and paralyses any power in interfering with the free action of individuals. To this effect Mr. Bright, 'who loves to walk in the old ways of the Constitution, said forcibly in one of his great speeches, what many other people are every day saying less forcibly, that the central idea of English life and politics is *the assertion of personal liberty*. Evidently this is so; but evidently, also, as feudalism, which with its ideas and habits of subordination was for many centuries silently behind the British Constitution, dies out, and we are left with nothing but our system of checks, and our notion of its being the great right and happiness of an Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes, we are in danger of drifting towards anarchy. We have not the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of *the State*, the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent

powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals."

And a few pages further :—

"The moment it is plainly put before us that a man is asserting his personal liberty, we are half-disarmed; because we are believers in freedom, and not in some dream of a right reason to which the assertion of our freedom is to be subordinated."

And again :—

"Well, then, what if we tried to rise above the idea of class to the idea of the whole community, *the State*, and to find our centre of light and authority there? Every one of us has the idea of country, as a sentiment; hardly any one of us has the idea of *the State*, as a working power."

And again :—

"So that our poor culture, which is flouted as so unpractical, leads us to the very ideas

capable of meeting the great want of our present embarrassed times! We want an authority, and we find nothing but jealous classes, checks and a deadlock; culture suggests the idea of *the State*. We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best self*." 27535.

There is much that is attractive in this point of view. But it wholly ignores the value of liberty as a discipline for the individual. The State may attain to right reason more easily and rapidly than many of the individuals who form part of it. But those individuals can only have their characters built up to love right reason better than wrong by being allowed freely to choose between the two. Only in the fresh air of freedom can wisdom and virtue grow strong.

Culture by itself would not be a formid-

able enemy to liberty. Arnold strikes a deadlier blow against "doing as one likes" in that admirable passage in the first "Essay in Criticism," where, invoking compassion and philanthropy as his allies, he contrasts the grandiloquent language of contemporary optimism with the bald statement of a newspaper telling of the tragic fate of an unhappy woman.

"Sir Charles Adderley says to the Warwickshire farmers:—

"Talk of the improvement of breed! Why, the race we ourselves represent, the men and women, the old Anglo-Saxon race, are the best breed in the whole world. . . . The absence of a too enervating climate, too unclouded skies, and a too luxurious nature, has produced so vigorous a race of people, and has rendered us so superior to all the world."

“Mr. Roebuck says to the Sheffield cutlers :—

“‘I look around me and ask what is the state of England? Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect security? I ask you whether, the world over, or in past history, there is anything like it? Nothing. I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last.’

“But let criticism leave church rates and the franchise alone, and in the most candid spirit, without a single lurking thought of practical innovation, confront with our dithyramb this paragraph on which I stumbled in a newspaper immediately after reading Mr. Roebuck :—

“‘A shocking child murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead

on Mapperley Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody.'

"Nothing but that ; but, in juxtaposition with the absolute eulogies of Sir Charles Adderley and Mr. Roebuck, how eloquent, how suggestive are those few lines ! 'Our old Anglo-Saxon breed, the best in the whole world !'—how much that is harsh and ill-favoured there is in this best ! *Wragg* ! If we are to talk of ideal perfection, of 'the best in the whole world,' has any one reflected what a touch of grossness in our race, what an original shortcoming in the more delicate spiritual perceptions, is shown by the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names. Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg. In Ionia and Attica they were luckier in this respect than 'the best race in the world' ; by the Ilissus there was no Wragg, poor thing ! And 'our unrivalled happiness' ;—what an element of grimness, bareness, and hideousness mixes with it and blurs it ; the workhouse, the dismal Mapperley Hills,—

how dismal those who have seen them will remember; the gloom, the smoke, the cold, the strangled illegitimate child! 'I ask you whether, the world over, or in past history, there is anything like it?' Perhaps not, one is inclined to answer; but at any rate, in that case, the world is very much to be pitied. And the final touch,—short, bleak, and inhuman: *Wragg is in custody*. The sex lost in the confusion of our unrivalled happiness; or (shall I say?) the superfluous Christian name lopped off by the straightforward vigour of our old Anglo-Saxon breed! There is profit for the spirit in such contrasts, as this; criticism serves the cause of perfection by establishing them. By eluding sterile conflict, by refusing to remain in the sphere where alone narrow and relative conceptions have any worth and validity, criticism may diminish its momentary importance, but only in this way has it a chance of gaining admittance for those wider and more perfect conceptions to which all its duty is really

owed. Mr. Roebuck will have a poor opinion of an adversary who replies to his defiant songs of triumph only by murmuring under his breath, 'Wragg is 'in custody'; but in no other way will these songs of triumph be induced gradually to moderate themselves, to get rid of what in them is excessive and offensive, and to fall into a softer and truer key."

This is the line of attack that is really menacing to liberty to-day. It has been pursued by many people since Arnold, and with no ordinary measure of success. Nor have they been content to use the appeal to compassion in his manner as a check on extravagant optimism and self-complacency. His whole gospel of the State and right reason against mere doing as one likes has been thus enforced—his whole gospel and something more. At every turn we are told to look away from

the principles of liberty to the actual sorrows and sufferings of mankind. The distress of the great towns, the evils of destitution and unemployment, and all the sorrows of the poor are pointed to as crying for a remedy, as something for the sake of which we must forget our abstract principles and must be content to do what will evidently relieve misery, whatever doctrinaires may tell us about liberty or even about economics. "Do not prate to us of freedom and individual rights; men and women are in distress, there is unemployment and sweating, poverty and destitution, hunger and cold. We cannot stop to listen to abstractions. 'Wragg is in custody.'" So it is said and with widespread assent and applause.

To this we can only answer that while a case may sometimes be made out so extreme

that normal principles of human progress must be laid aside, yet this must be an exception—a costly palliative which will bring evil as well as good in its train. For, let us be sure of it, that if we are right in supposing that humanity only makes true progress by choosing between right and wrong, we must pay a great price even for the most evidently necessary social reform which involves a diminution of liberty. Let me take as an illustration of this proposition something so estimable, so justly estimable, and so praised even above its just value as compulsory education. Now, we should all agree that it was necessary to apply compulsion to the great body of the population in order that the children of the rising generation might be suitably educated. But is it not becoming ever more and more plain that we have paid a not inconsiderable price

for applying compulsion even for so precious and so necessary an object as the general education of the people? For what has happened? There is no growth but, on the contrary, so far as we are able to judge, a diminution in the sense of parental responsibility on the part of parents, and of parental authority on the part of children. The State has stepped in and taken education out of the hands of the parent; the parent has ceased to think that it is any business of his to educate his children, and, on the other hand, the children have ceased to think that parents have any right to determine their education. Accordingly when the State lays down its burden, which it does when the child has attained a comparatively early age, we find nothing, or nothing adequate at any rate, to take the State's place. The child is turned out from school at thirteen or fourteen,

or whatever the age may be, and from that time onwards the parent does not in the common case assume the right to educate his child or to control his training, nor does the child look to the parent for such control. And accordingly we have statements made by those who are well qualified to judge, that a great number of youths become casual labourers and sink into distress because in youth they are not properly trained to any methodical habits, or to any definite trade. You have smashed by your compulsory system the natural educational machinery, and when your artificial machinery comes to an end there is nothing to do the work. Thus, so soon as the children have passed out of the State school they have passed into a condition not better than would have existed if compulsory education had never been established, but much worse. There

is no natural growth, as there ought to be in a healthy state, of the sense of parental responsibility or of the importance of parental authority. The working classes of this country are not approaching, so far as we can judge, the standard in these matters that has long prevailed among the well-to-do who are allowed to educate their children or not, as they think proper. The artificiality of your system has spoiled what was natural, and left you nothing in its place.

Then we approach the next stage. People are now beginning to say, "You must go further; you have compelled the children to go to school when they are of tender years; you must apply compulsion to a further stage; you must undertake something for the youths." All sorts of proposals are being put forward, and I do not doubt that sooner or later something on these lines will have

to be done. But let it be observed that if you do it you will come a little later on to exactly the same sort of difficulty. You will find that if the youth is educated the young man must still be left free, and the State can never take the place, however far it prolongs its activities, of real home influence, of such influence as is exercised by the conscientious parent of the wealthier classes who does his duty by his children. There is no limit of age to that sort of influence. It goes on as long as the parent lives; it extends not merely through the period of youth, but far into the period of maturity. Nothing that the State can do will ever take the place of that. But you will say, this is all visionary, the great majority of the working classes will never exercise that sort of influence however much you leave it on their shoulders to do it. They are naturally and inevitably

concerned with so much that is harassing and difficult in the ordinary maintenance of life that they cannot spare the mental energy, they can scarcely spare the time, for exerting that kind of influence over their children. There is much truth in this, but here comes in a principle which we ought never to forget, that it is of priceless value to bring even a few in a community on to the true paths of human progress. Matthew Arnold himself drew attention to the immense value of a remnant in a people: nations, as he said, were saved by their remnants. So it is not a conclusive answer to say that most of the working class would neglect to educate the growing youth of their children. It is not by itself a conclusive argument, because if some did so the community might gain far more in setting a few on the true path of progress, in bringing them up really to be

all that they can be made by a healthy system than will be gained by a much larger body being compelled to do what depends for its highest value on being done by a man's own volition, and with all the elasticity and efficiency which belongs to voluntary effort.

But I must not be understood to argue that the adoption of compulsory education was wrong, nor even that its extension would be wrong. The circumstances may have made, may now make, an infringement of liberty necessary. My point is that such infringements always bring with them evil as well as good. We must agree to them with reluctance and discontent. And if we wish to see our country growing greater we must see to it that the sacrifice which is made of the true principles of progress is made only with the sense that we are to pass through some sort of temporary transitional

stage, and return again to sound principles as soon as we are able. We must not allow ourselves to think that the action of the State and the machinery of compulsion can be allowed permanently to take the place of that natural system of liberty by which alone human beings rise in the scale of creation, by which alone true progress is achieved. I dwell on this subject of education because it is, from both points of view, a strong instance. No one denies that it has been necessary to use the machinery of compulsion as a temporary measure; no one, on the other hand, denies that we are face to face with grave difficulties, precisely because we have smashed the natural system of education, a system which depends upon the just liberty of the parent. By reflecting on the evils of compulsion even in this case, we shall acquire a spirit of caution in regard to pro-

posals for further exhibitions of the same dangerous drug.

Among the schemes which are made to supplement the educational machinery of the country where it is admitted to be lacking, the most notable is perhaps the proposal that we should have some form of compulsory military training for the young. It is no part of my subject to discuss whether what is called national service is necessary for the purpose of national defence. Of course if it be necessary for the purpose of national defence it ought to be adopted. But for the moment I am not considering it in that light. For the advocates of national service are not content to argue that it will add to the military resources of the country, and that it will therefore make for national independence and integrity. They supplement these arguments by the further argument that it

will give to youth that element of discipline which, as is truly said, seems now to be greatly lacking. Well, let us be sure of what we mean by discipline. If by discipline is meant self-discipline, the element of self-control, the power to refuse what is pleasant, to choose what is hard, that certainly is a most precious quality. That is indeed precisely the quality for the promotion of which liberty is so necessary. It is because we want people to be self-disciplined that we want them to be free. It is because we want them voluntarily to choose what is not in appearance agreeable that we insist upon the importance of liberty. But is it the case that soldiers are pre-eminent in self-discipline? It is perhaps too homely an argument for this occasion and this audience; but I confess that while I am proud to reckon among my friends many soldiers and

many civilians, I have never been able to notice that the soldiers are superior in self-control and self-discipline to the civilians. So far as these great moral qualities go, I think the civilians would fairly be able to claim that they are not inferior—perhaps even that they are superior—to their military contemporaries. Discipline, then, in the military sense, means something different. It means, I apprehend, obedience, what is called in military language subordination. Now no one doubts the immense value and power of that sort of discipline in increasing the efficiency of those who submit to it. An army differs from a mob, as we are always told, because it obeys orders. That is true, and that superior efficiency gained by obedience extends of course far beyond the operations of war. But I am not quite sure whether, if we look attentively at it, we shall

decide that the power that is engendered by discipline is invariably a good thing in a community. Certainly it is very necessary for the army. But what we are now considering is not whether it is necessary for the army, but whether we are to use the army or some form of military training to extend this quality to the whole people. Now let me remind this audience that the most perfectly disciplined body in the world, those who have increased their power of discipline further than any others ever heard of, are a body, renowned indeed and revered by some sections of the community, but nevertheless not in good odour among the great majority of the people of this country. I mean the Society of Jesus. No one has ever been so disciplined as they; no one has ever carried obedience so far as they have carried it. And yet opinion is on the whole predomin-

antly in favour of the position that the Jesuits have done more harm than good. That shows surely that there is something non-ethical, something which may even be formidable or destructive in the power that discipline brings; that it is no more than any of the great physical forces, like gunpowder or electricity, a thing necessarily beneficial. It strengthens those that have it, but it does not necessarily elevate, edify, or purify them. And in a democratic country there is surely an evident and great danger in this drilled obedience which we often hear so highly praised. I should like to ask my Conservative friends who are enthusiastic—as some of them are—for the universal inculcation of drill and obedience, whether they would like it if every workman who belonged to a trades union always obeyed the leaders of that union. And again I

should like to ask some of my Liberal friends who are captivated by the same proposals whether they would like the clergy of the Church of England to exercise the sort of authority that the Roman priesthood have sometimes exercised over their flocks. Obedience, the habit of obedience, once inculcated into a people, will certainly not be limited in its application. To wish to teach the people of this country the habit of obedience, and yet to leave them the spirit to take their own line against their trades union leaders, or the parson of their parish, is foolish. If they are taught obedience as a habit, be sure of it they will obey in ways that many of us will think very undesirable indeed. Obedience is in truth a non-moral habit. It may make for good, but it may also make for evil. It belongs, if I may remind you again of that

distinction between the animal and the divine, to the animal side of our nature. Horses and dogs, no less than human beings, can be trained to obey; but the training of self-discipline, the training which a free man—and a free man only—can get by choosing between what is wise and foolish, and learning to choose what is wise, that is human, and belongs to the image of the divine.

I could say more upon the errors of the authoritarian critics of liberty. It is obvious to point out that they often insist upon things which are very trivial indeed; that they are often singularly impatient of what are really slight evils; and are ready to impair liberty for objects that, as events show or as reason would point out, are wholly unworthy of any serious complaint. Matthew Arnold himself loudly lamented

that one of the finest sites in London, in Trafalgar Square, was to be dedicated to a manufactory of surgical appliances. I have always wondered at what point in the history of our time that danger was averted or was corrected. Certainly now, Trafalgar Square is not defaced by any such building. The triviality of this grievance, so slight and transient, is in truth characteristic of those who have once given themselves over to the idea that the State should put everything straight. There is nothing that gains upon the human appetite so quick as the desire to settle other people's business by the hand of authority. We all of us feel able to correct everything, from the morals to the accounts of our neighbours. We are not slow to use the power of the State, even for the most trumpery purposes, if we can but get control of it. Patience is one of

the moral qualities in which the devotee of liberty far surpasses his authoritarian opponents. He submits to, see people often do wrong for the sake of their sometimes doing right. He knows that it is only by the choice between right and wrong that the true path of progress can be trodden, and that in freedom alone can humanity move onwards from the animal to the divine. Strong in this knowledge, he endures with tranquillity much that is faulty, and invokes the aid of the State rarely, with reluctance and in extremity.

Next to the teaching of the authoritarians, the most formidable error which, as it seems to me, menaces liberty, is the error which is expressed in the phrase "the equality of man." It is not a little strange, I think, that equality and liberty should have become associated together in the French Revolution,

and that to this day, in consequence, thoughtless people should suppose that they are both naturally parts of a common creed. For, in fact, whereas liberty is, as I have tried to argue, the very essential of human progress and growth towards an ultimate perfection, equality is an unreal delusion which never has existed and never can exist. So far from all men being equal, it might quite safely be said that no two men are ever equal to one another. We have but to consider any two persons whom we number among our acquaintance, to see at a glance that whatever else they are, they are not equal. In physical strength they are unequal; in mental accomplishments they are unequal; in spiritual quality they are unequal. There are no two men who are equal to one another, and to emphasise the doctrine of the equality of man is nothing else than to impose upon

mankind an unreal standard ; to try to force humanity into a mould into which it will not fit ; and to produce in consequence evils, some of which menace the precious principle of personal liberty, Burke it was who pointed out that the insistence on equality by the French revolutionary leaders was in fact a preparation for despotism ; and what was true in 1790 is always true. If authority levels what may be called the natural inequalities ; if it rolls people out into a dead flat of civil and political equality ; it does but make way for some inequality much more oppressive, much less easily borne, than the inequalities which are imposed by the hand of Nature or have arisen out of the inequalities so imposed. Each generation of men, themselves unequal, will under free conditions accumulate the results of their inequalities and transmit them to the next, thus com-

plicating and intensifying the variety and degree of inequality which is inherent in mankind. This natural tendency, like other such, needs to be restrained and controlled lest it threaten liberty. But at their worst, natural inequalities can hardly be more dangerous to liberty than the attempt forcibly to impose an artificial equality; while duly restrained such inequalities are a precious safeguard of liberty. For their varied character limits the evils that spring from the egotism and ambition of individuals or classes, and secures by, as it were, a balance of influences, the essentials of liberty and justice.

We can see this by considering cases which are well known, and which rise to the mind almost at once. For example, if we look at France, which has insisted so strongly on the principle of equality, we find more

bureaucratic interference with personal liberty than would be tolerated in this country. And we find—what is very remarkable—that the fabric of constitutional liberty is subject to most serious dangers and has been actually overthrown, because there is so little power of resistance to the central government in the provincial localities, or in the various classes of the community. When in 1851 Napoleon III carried out the *coup d'état*, it was enough for him to secure Paris and the central government. There was no substantial resistance in the provinces possible; and that was because there had been no natural inequalities, or comparatively few, allowed to accumulate in France since the great revolution of 1789. Equality had been artificially imposed by the hand of authority. Accordingly, when an ingenious statesman and a knot of friends secured the control of

the machinery of the State, nothing was left to the friends of liberty. They had no natural fortresses to retire into, and liberty fell without a struggle. France was politically what it was physically, a land bare of hedgerows, over which the cruel trampling of cavalry can sweep at will. Similarly you can look at America and see with what effect they have destroyed the inequalities with which in this country we are familiar. They are now exposed to a form of inequality much more odious and much more dangerous than those more antique inequalities which they have cast out. Kings and nobles are banished from the soil of the United States, but the result is only that plutocrats take their place with, as far as we are able to judge, a slighter sense of public duty, and a more real power; and liberty, individual rights, and the maintenance

of justice, are much more seriously threatened by the new inequality than by the old. But perhaps the most striking of the mischiefs that spring from the false doctrine of the equality of man is where you would least expect to find it, in the treatment of inferior races. It seems a paradox indeed that to teach the equality of man should be the cause of the ill-treatment of particular races of men. But I cannot doubt that it is so. Why is it that the British race, the race of these islands, is superior in skill, humanity, and justice, in its dealings with inferior races to our American cousins, or even, perhaps, we may venture to say, to our Colonial brethren? Why is it? I think it is because we believe so far less in equality than do either Americans or Colonists. The young officer who goes out to control large bodies of black or brown humanity is perfectly familiar with the idea that one

man may be inferior to another. It is deep seated in his own mind. He is hardly aware that any one can take a different view. He has never been accustomed to think that all mankind are equal, or that those who are evidently below him should be regarded as on the same level as himself. He has never been accustomed, on the other hand, to think that those who are beneath him are not entitled to be treated with justice. Easily, naturally, justly, humanely, he places the inferior race in the station to which they belong and governs them for their own good, without being tempted in respect to them either to an unwise extension of political power, or a cruel refusal of civil rights. Indeed, we may say that the proposition that all men are equal, which is dictated by false theory, and the proposition that the black man is clearly inferior to the white man,

which is dictated by common sense, lead inexorably to the syllogistic conclusion that the black man is not a man at all but an animal, and therefore to a quasi-slavery and the oppression and injustice that surround it. It is by realising that men are not equal, that they are almost infinitely divided by inequalities, that we are able to adjust the relations between white and black, and therefore to allow justice to prevail as a universal right without invading the sensitive sensibilities of those who are conscious of superiority, and will, whatever we may say to them, sooner or later resent the false claim to equality between the two races. I believe that the success of the British Empire in dealing with its vast dependencies results more from this quality than from any other—that we, unlike other parts of the Anglo-Saxon race, unlike the French or the

Belgians, have always denied the equality of men, and always proceeded on the principle that men are unequal but are alike entitled to be treated with justice. To put the matter in a sentence, it is because we believe in liberty and do not believe in equality that we have not unworthily fulfilled our great Imperial vocation,

Now if all this be so, how can we look without grave alarm upon the growth of bodies of doctrine which partly preach a diminution of liberty, and partly enforce belief in a fictitious equality? How can we contemplate without the most serious apprehensions to our national well-being, the growth of what we know as Socialism? For Socialism combines these great evils. It insists upon equality, and it is an elaborate system for the restriction of the individual and the enlargement of the function of the

State. Why, we may ask, how comes it, that in our time this movement has grown and has become stronger, if indeed liberty has all that I have claimed for it? The reason, I think, is this. Although humanity is progressing steadily towards a greater , capacity for freedom, although the normal progress has not been interrupted, and it is still the case, as it has always been, and must be, that men go forward towards the divine in proportion as they become more free; yet there has also grown with this, moral progress an impatience of manifest evils which leads people to seek for some short cut by which they may escape them. And there are not wanting short cuts most attractively recommended. I must avoid allusion to quite contemporary politics, or I should be tempted to draw your attention to the position of the working classes at the present

time, and to the happy prospect that seems to lie before them. They are being offered from two opposite points of view relief from some of the greatest evils from which they suffer, by alternative resources so agreeable as the taxation of dukes or as the taxation of foreigners ; imposts almost equally attractive to the uncoroneted patriot. This desire for short cuts leads, I think, to many errors. In truth and reality there are no short cuts out of any of the greater evils from which humanity suffers. But the search for short cuts will become mischievous indeed if we are thus led away from what is the true path of progress. If we enfeeble human nature by removing from it the discipline of liberty, then certainly we shall not be merely standing still, we shall be wandering astray ; and while we use the machinery of the State to get, as we think,

somewhat nearer the solution of this problem or that, we shall all the time be destroying that on which the State itself depends, that from which alone any real and permanent good can come—the individual character, with its power of self-control and courageous choice between right and wrong, between wisdom and folly.

Nothing in our time is more necessary for the national well-being than that the working classes of this country should be devoted to the principle of liberty. The higher classes have always cherished it. In our country, at any rate, the love of liberty is an aristocratic virtue. It is a virtue which will, I hope, always dominate our government. For in the true, though, of course, not in the conventional and vulgar sense of the word, the British Government ought to be now, as it has been for centuries,

an aristocracy, that is a government by the best. Constitutional progress in our country might be described not in the common phrase as the transference of power from an aristocracy to a democracy, but as the constant extension of an aristocracy until it has included almost the whole people. It is important that the 'working class, admitted to the authority of aristocrats, should not want the virtues which belong to an aristocracy; and of all the virtues which have been associated with the English aristocracy there is none more precious than the love of liberty. At present those who are wealthy, who are accustomed to live easy and leisured lives, contend more strongly and more passionately for their own individual freedom than the body of the working classes who have only more recently been raised to the function of

government. But I hope this is only a transitional stage. I hope the people of our country will inherit to the full that great tradition of fighting for the individual's rights, the great tradition which teaches each man to look for help and progress to himself, to his own capacity and his own strength, trained by self-discipline and self-control, and not to the State's enervating hand. If, in our haste to get rid of evils, we trust to the power of the State; if, still worse, we are misled by talk about an equality which never can be real and may easily be destructive, then assuredly we have parted from the true road; we are going astray over marshy and dangerous country, in which we may easily lose the way of progress altogether. I look, I confess, to the maintenance of liberty as to one of the greatest issues that can be before the people at the

present time. If they value liberty with their whole hearts, if they really think that it matters most, not whether right is done, not whether evils are destroyed in our time or in the generation that succeeds, but whether we learn, and our children learn, to choose what is good and to reject what is evil,—if that feeling is deeply seated in the hearts of the people, then certainly we may have good courage, whatever may be the particular trend of the party battle at one time or another. For it is in the growth of liberty, in the growth of the free choice of good and the free rejection of evil, that we move towards the ideal of a divine society which religion and natural reflection alike set before us as the goal of our hope. Certainly humanity must move forward, the divine image of freedom constantly more apparent in its countenance, until it attains

to likeness to the only Being in the universe He has made Who is perfectly free. So mankind will learn to be able to live in a society devoted to virtue and yet wholly unconstrained, altogether released from the restrictions of authority and yet altogether conformed to the standard of perfection, in a society built up into a symmetrical structure by the ordered inequalities of various talents and vocations, and held together not by coercive law and restraint, but by the spontaneous cohesion of virtuous wills. This is the ideal set before us, this is the true celestial city, guarded by walls which shall never be overthrown, illumined by light which shall never be extinguished.

Printed by
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED
Edinburgh
r

323.44/CRC



27535

14.8.58

